2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
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I met two attractive sisters left unmarried long after the usual time and asked the reason. I was told, 'Their husbands come and live here a short time, and then they go. They say, "The mother is mean. She stints us of porridge. She gives us no respect."' In the same way I have heard young men discussing the pros and cons of cross-cousin marriage and concluding, 'Cross-cousin marriage is not so good. Our aunts (*banyina senge*) do not give us as much respect as other women would. They do not send us food every day or cover the dishes elegantly.'

The importance of the offering of food to the son-in-law continues long after the wife has become an independent householder, cooking on her own. His mother-in-law continues to send him dishes. In fact, the offering of food by the woman to the man is one of the essential obligations of kinship and other social ties. It is part of the legal duty of a wife to cook porridge for her husband and to allow him a predominant share of it, and hence it becomes a privilege and a matter of pride. I noticed that young girls, recently betrothed, would intimate this fact by saying shyly: 'I have begun to cook for him.' Older married women will beg, borrow, or work for food to supply their husbands if their own granary is empty. Each wife in a polygamous household will cook for her husband even if she has insufficient for herself, so that a husband may get two or three dishes of porridge while a wife and her children may go short. I saw a second wife, whose garden had been destroyed by locusts, live with her three children for two days entirely on mushrooms, while the last remnants of her millet were ground up daily to provide a diminutive dish of porridge for her husband, the latter amply supplied by his more fortunate head-wife, who had so much surplus millet that she sat at the other end of the village brewing beer with it. To my question as to why the second wife did not keep her grain for herself and her children and leave the first to supply the husband, the reply was immediate: 'Because she hates her fellow wife.' The rivalry natural between co-wives was expressed in the competition over the provision of food. The Bemba woman's prestige largely rests on her power to provide porridge and relish for her male relatives and to serve it nicely. These are the dues a man expects from his mother-in-law, his wife, and a number of other women in his kinship group.

It is the *umucinshi*[1] that matters to both parties, as well as the filling of the belly. Hence the women in a village do not attempt

[1] [i.e., custom. – Analyst]

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264 to organize the supply of eating-baskets sent to the young men's shelter. There may be two one day and twelve another.[1] It does not matter. Every mother-in-law sends just whenever she has time and supplies, so that the men of the village have a varying amount to eat from day to day. The regularity of the diet is thus directly affected by the symbolic use of offerings of cooked food.

The Cooking Team.

252 476 602 We have turned for a moment from our main subject, the joint preparation of food, but it will be seen that the system of inter-dependent matrilocal households provides two units of economic co-operation, the women's and the men's. The former look for relish, fetch firewood, pound, grind, and cook together, and usually do their gardening work in twos and threes. The latter clear the bush for gardens jointly and, more rarely, hoe in common. But it is important to remember that the ties of kinship between the women's group are stronger than those between men. The women who work together are usually the old grandmother, her married daughter, her unmarried girls and adolescent granddaughters, besides other female relatives temporarily with her. The team may not be as large, of course. Every household in the village does not belong to a 'big house'. There may be only two or three individual families linked together, especially in a new village. But the basis of co-operation is the same in each case—mother and daughter, grandmother and granddaughter, sister and sister,[2] &c., and it is the matrilocal family pattern which will be ultimately reproduced as a normal process of development. So much is this the case [595] that the wives of a polygamist never cook together, but each works with her own mother, sister, or any other female relatives who may happen to be in the village.[3] It is the solidarity and common activities of groups of the mother-daughter type which form the basis of the Bemba village. A man's own female relatives, his mother and sister, may be dependent on him, but they do not form part of the cooking unit. In-law taboos prevent a woman [606 607] from co-operating closely with her mother-in-law, and her relations with her sister-in-law are usually constrained, if not hostile.

[1] Cf. p. 183. [2] Using these terms in the classificatory sense.

[3] The wives of a chief are often an exception in this respect. They seem to have accepted the status of polygamy more completely than the wives of commoners, and the heavy work involved in cooking for tribute labour makes it almost necessary for them to co-operate.

3: Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1956
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wife to the village of his own matrilineal relatives or whether he will remain for ever with his wife's relatives. In the old days, when conditions of life were more precarious, there is evidence that fathers were unwilling to let their daughters go away from home during times of war and raiding. When I was in Lubemba a man was allowed to remove his wife to his own village if he had produced children by her and shown himself to be a steady fellow. The decision seemed to depend on the relative personality and status of father-in-law and son-in-law. As I have shown elsewhere,[1] a chief was above the tribal rule and could marry virilocally, as could a polygamist in the case of a second wife. A man of rank or of good behaviour could certainly remove his wife within a few years, as could a man called to succeed to his maternal uncle's position, but during the year of my visit there were still men who had remained as 'strangers' in their wife's villages all their married life.

It will be seen at once that the pivotal relationships of the extended family, which is the basic residential unit in Bemba society, are the ties between a mother and her daughters. It is the women who attract the husbands who increase the community and it is they who usually remain in charge of the children when the young fathers go away to work in the mines. In fact a group of sisters living with their mother become so attached to each other and their joint way of life that one of them will sometimes refuse to follow her husband to the latter's village when he wants to move, and her marriage may then break up.

It will be seen, too, that there are several sources of tension in this type of kinship system. First the ties of loyalty which bind a man to his matrilineal descent group clash to a certain extent with the obligations he owes to his local group, his wife's extended family. At marriage he is separated from the very relatives with whom he is legally identified, and from the mother's brother to whose position he will ultimately succeed. He is in a galling position in many ways. He lives in a community based on kinship traced through women and he is economically dependent on his wife's people and working under their orders. Sometimes the bride-

[1] 'Some Types of Family Structure among the Central Bantu', in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, edited by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, 1950.

575 Polygynous marriages occur throughout this area and the second marriage of a man is usually virilocal instead of uxorilocal. Save for chiefs, however, the polygynous household is not a recognised social unit as it is amongst the patrilineal southern and eastern Bantu. Where commoners marry two or more women, the second or third wife often lives in a different part of the village. Among chiefs, however, the wives live in huts fenced [622] round by a common stockade. Nowadays polygyny is not generally practised by commoners, though chiefs may have as many as several dozen wives. A sample of 209 Bemba marriages in the Chinsali district in 1939 showed 68% to be monogamously married, while an earlier sample showed 59%.(1) Similar figures are not available for the other tribes in the area.

582 Marriage within the Bemba clan is not permitted and Bemba themselves say they are prohibited also from marrying within their father's clan. This is not strictly true, since the preferential marriages of the Bemba include cross-cousins on both the father's and the mother's side. A further preferential marriage is that between a man and the classificatory granddaughter. From 144 marriages in 6 villages, 49% were between cross-cousins and a further 7% with grand-daughters.(2) A chief, but not a commoner, may marry the daughter of a son. A woman has rights over her brother's daughter, whom she may demand as an additional wife for her husband, or as a substitute, should she herself be tired of her partner and wish to return to live with her brother.

Inter-tribal marriages appear to be common today but formerly marriage was not allowed between members of tribes which believed that they shared a common origin. Gouldsbury, for instance, states that marriage was forbidden between the Bemba and the Northern Alunga, Senga and Aushi, but was permitted with the Southern Alunga, Tabwa, Lunda, Lamba, Bisa and Chishinga.

Divorce

586 Divorce was and is common amongst the Bemba, particularly in the early years of married life when the union is considered in some respects to be on trial. Where divorce occurs the children belong to the mother and her matrilineage, and no return is made for the service of the son-in-law or his token presents. Unga divorce rates, resulting from the absence of husbands from home, are extremely low according to Brelsford.(3) Formerly divorce seems to have been a family affair among the Unga, action being taken by the family of the injured party. Data for other tribes in this group are not available. Throughout this area main grounds for divorce appear to be the following: sterility, adultery, failure to perform domestic duties, or desertion on the part of the woman; impotence, ill-treatment and prolonged desertion on the part of the man.

FAMILY AND FAMILY EXTENSION

[illegible] Among the Bemba the basic domestic unit is not usually the individual household composed of a man, his wife and young children, but a group of related households consisting of a middle-aged or old man and his wife; their married daughters and the latters' husbands and children. A young Bemba

(1) Richards, 8, 1940, Table A. (2) Richards, 8, 1940.
(3) Brelsford, 2, 1949, p.103.

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342 compact, and sun-dried brick is increasingly being used in building. Appendages usually include a raised granary-storehouse, a platform for drying
361 cassava, a kitchen, goat-and-sheep pen and latrine. Fishing camps are of more flimsy construction consisting of wattle-and-daub or grass shelters.

361 On the left bank of the Luapula, where the density of the population
621 and its mobility are less, greater concentrations of kinsfolk occur in the villages, which are more isolated and irregularly distributed.

592 In polygynous households there is a house for each wife. An open
915 space is left in front of the headman's hut which otherwise does not differ from the others. There are bachelor huts (*itanda*, pl. *amatanda*) for boys but few for girls.

361 During the Yeke raids the population was concentrated in some dozen
722 stockaded villages.

361 Village-gardens are occasionally enclosed as a precaution against the bush-pig, especially near Lake Mweru. Each village has its own landing-stage (*cabu*).

621 People are now free to build where they wish and the tendency for houses of kinsfolk to be grouped together is disappearing. As the Watch Tower movement developed separate villages were set up by believers who cultivated and harvested in the fields communally.(1)

INITIATION RITES

881 Initiation rites were more elaborate for girls than for boys. Girls still undergo *cisungu*, a *rite de passage*, common to the Bemba-speaking peoples but not found among the Luba, which aims at preparing them for their future life and duties as housewives and mothers. The instruction is imparted by the *Banaciabusa*, matrons and midwives.

[304] There are now no initiation ceremonies for boys. Lunda boys were formerly circumcised at 14-16 years of age(2) in a *mushitu* (thicket) in the Nshinda swamp. No parallel operation was performed on girls.

561 The society is not formally differentiated on the basis of age, and there are no indications of the existence of an age-set organisation.

SECRET SOCIETIES

575 Of the secret societies the *Butwa*(3) was open to both sexes. *Bulinda* is described as a women's society.(4) The *Butwa*, believed to have originated among the Twa of Lake Bangweulu and to have been established in the country prior to the arrival of the Bemba-speaking peoples,(5) had lodges "along the entire length of the Luapula as far as Lake Mweru on both the British and the Belgian sides"(6) in 1914. "Nkuba is the recognised

(1) Quick, 1940, p.221.
(2) Burton, p.128.
(3) Campbell, I, 1914.
(4) Crawford, 2, p.129.
(5) According to Campbell. Another version is that it came "with the migratory tribes of the Kazembe's, the Walunda and the Wausi, from the west about 1760." (Gouldsbury and Sheane, 1911, p.260.)
(6) Campbell, op.cit., p.77.

643 At state functions the Kazembe appeared sitting on a stool placed upon
292 lion-skins. He was shaded by a canopy of umbrellas made of coarse native
293 cotton fabric(1) and wore an elaborate head-dress of scarlet and yellow
534 feathers, the *muconzo* cloth adorned with bead and cowrie ornaments, the
535 *insipo* girdle of hide,(2) and the *lukano* armband, emblem of his office.(3)
His notables and musicians sat nearby. Ceremonial dancing was performed
to the accompaniment of music.(4) Musical instruments(5) were *marimba*(6)
(a sort of xylophone), *chincufo*(7) (a bass drum), *imbirebire* (big conical
drum with cowhide or an elephant's ear stretched over the open end), *gonsti*
(two pieces of iron connected by a curved rod). The *mondo*,(8) a hollow
wooden cylinder beated with drumsticks, was used to convey messages by means
of varying combinations of beats. The big sacred *chambuncua* drum,(9) resting
on a lion's skin in Kazembe's palace, was only brought out in wartime to
accompany the armies.

521 Clan and tribal history and family genealogies are favourite subjects
526 of discussion at beer-drinking parties. District and village rivalry now
finds expression in football matches.

BIRTH, MARRIAGE, DEATH

842 The male alone was thought to be instrumental in begetting children.
847 Babies who cut their upper teeth first were destroyed as bearers of bad
551 luck.(9) An infant is usually given the name of one of its dead ancestors
on either the paternal or maternal side; this gives some indication of an-
cestry. Chinyanta, Lukwesa, Ilunga, Muonga, are characteristic Lunda
names.

582 The effective exogamous unit is the *cikota*. Preferential marriage is
with the *mafyala*, a person whose father is a fellow-clansman of one's mother
or conversely, and particularly with father's sister's daughter. A network
of affinal relationships thus develops between villages. In general there
are no definite preferences leading to marriages between certain clans, but
583 traditional reputations attaching to clans may cause their members to be
591 regarded as desirable or undesirable marriage partners. Marriage payments
are low. Both matrilocal and patrilocal marriages occur, but for the first
few years marriage is usually matrilocal so that the husband can "get
accustomed". He puts up a temporary hut in the *citente* of his parents-in-
law and becomes a member of their extended family. Later the couple are at
liberty to move. Often the parents of both spouses live in the same
● 595 village. Lunda marriages tend to be patrilocal. Polygyny is not frequent.
The second wife is usually inherited, e.g. she may be one's elder brother's
widow. A man may marry a younger sister of his wife but not an elder sis-
ter, since she is called *nyofyala*, "mother-in-law".

764 The dead are buried in the bush. A *mwali* (see p.86 above) of the de-
ceased takes part in the ceremony. To divert the thoughts of the partici-

(1) Burton, p.254.
(2) Valdez, II, pp.217-8; cf. Livingstone, I, pp.262-3; Burton, p.42; Bowdich, p.91
(3) Burton, p.253. (4) Valdez, II, p.227; Burton, p.114.
(5) Valdez, op.cit., pp.222-4; Livingstone, I, p.305.
(6) Burton, p.112; Valdez, op.cit., p.255.
(7) Cenitto, I, p.343. (8) ibid., pp.342-3.
(9) ibid., pp.331-2. (10) Livingstone, I, p.276.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

more usual to live with kinsmen on the matrilineal side, the grandfather or the mother's brother, yet a man may choose to live with his father's people by preference, and they play an important part at all the great ceremonial occasions in his life. The strength of the bilateral *ulupwa* is in fact one of the distinguishing features of the Bemba kinship system as compared with the strongly patrilineal societies of South Africa to my mind. It affects the political system in two ways. First, it allows for a much greater variety in the composition of the village, and more possibilities of change in its membership; and, secondly, we find in the case of the chief's relatives that the *ulupwa* of a ruler is an important unit in the whole political machine. A ruler's sons receive positions and office as well as his heirs, the maternal nephews; and his father's relatives and those related to him by marriage are also favoured, so that his grip over the country is a strong one.

(2) *Local Grouping*. The local unit in Bemba society is the village (*umushi*, plur. *imishi*). It contains on an average thirty to fifty huts, and is a kinship unit first and foremost. A village comes into being when a middle-aged or elderly man has acquired a big enough following of relatives to justify his applying to the chief for permission to set up a community on his own. He usually builds near other relatives, but land is so plentiful that it is perfectly possible for him to settle almost where he pleases within the chief's domain. The core of the village consists in the first place of the headman's own matrilocal family group, i.e. his married daughters with their husbands and children, and probably members of his matrilineal descent-group, i.e. his sisters and their children. Polygamy is rare. A chief will have a number of wives, say ten to fifteen, but commoners do not often have more than one.

A successful headman will be able to attract more distant relatives to him, both on the patrilineal and matrilineal side. On his death he may be succeeded by his heir, and such a local community may continue in existence with frequent changes in its composition, for two, three, or even more generations. Indeed, the village of the hereditary officials of the paramount chief (*bakabilo*, cf. pp. 100, 108) remain permanently fixed in one village. Thus in every district there are a number of new villages brought into existence by the chief's favour (*ukupokelafye kuli mfumu*) and therefore specially dependent on his support. These include communities newly gathered together by commoner headmen, as